

For Immediate Release

February 14, 2020

In recent days both myself, and my newly founded campus organization, America First Students, have been targeted by a vicious left-wing smear campaign. On Tuesday, February 11, Judy Thomas of the Kansas City Star released an article baselessly implying that I am a “white nationalist.” Furthermore, the article suggested that my independent initiative to break away from Turning Point USA and the subsequent formation of America First Students is a “trial run” for the “white nationalist movement.” Neither of these claims are true or supported by any evidence whatsoever. This disgusting piece of libel also falsely associated me with the Charlottesville, Virginia “Unite the Right” rally, an event that I did not attend or support.

Judy Thomas attempted to contact me for my response to her smear piece barely one hour before her high-impact article was published on the *Star* website, replete with massive images and a video clip of the Charlottesville rally as well as the deliberately misleading “white nationalist” label in its headline. The editorial decision to give me, a busy 20-year-old college student, almost no time to respond to such serious accusations demonstrates bad faith, malicious intent, and a blatant disregard for the truth. Thomas’ irresponsible article relies almost exclusively on a report recently published by a little known, agenda-driven outfit; the organization itself admits that I “lack the same lengthy paper-trail of explicit white nationalism,” a subtle admission that there is no evidence for these incendiary and irresponsible claims.

Thomas’ piece quotes so-called “expert” Devin Burghart, executive director of the Institute for Research and Education on Human Rights and co-author of the cited 64-page report, admitting that “it’s too soon to tell whether America First Students is a white nationalist organization.” Yet, the headline, Charlottesville imagery, and multiple invocations of “white nationalist” labeling in reference to myself and my organization in Thomas’ article seem to imply the contrary. As a result of this deceitful slander, I have already been convicted in the court of public opinion, as evidenced by the reaction to this piece on social media and on campus.

The false conclusions by the report’s authors are quoted by Ms. Thomas so extensively and uncritically that her article constitutes a slanted opinion piece rather than honest journalism. The claim that my independent campus activism is being directed by anyone other than myself, especially anyone related to stoking violence at Charlottesville, is a baseless lie that damages my reputation and endangers my public safety. Additionally, the *Star* reported that the launch of America First Students was announced at the Groyper Leadership Summit in December 2019. This is demonstrably untrue, and if Thomas had bothered to simply review the recording of the conference in question, she would find no mentions of my organization.

It is well documented that I, of my own accord, decided to start America First Students after becoming frustrated with the direction of the national TPUSA organization. My initial misgivings arose when TPUSA leaders leaped to false conclusions in January 2019 about another young conservative smeared recklessly by the media as a bigot based on zero evidence, Nick Sandmann.

To conclude, neither I nor America First Students, represent white nationalism in any way, shape, or form. AFS is a mainstream, Christian, conservative organization that supports President Donald Trump. The present controversy is nothing more than a calculated political hit job by the Kansas City Star, a failing outlet that is so desperate for clicks they would lie about and defame a 20-year-old campus conservative rather than report actual news.

Jaden McNeil

Founder and President
America First Students